



## **GOP national convention: What's in it for our cities?**

**Three Views: Mayor R.T. Rybak, Erin Dady and Mayor Gene Winstead**



Photo courtesy of Mayor Rybak's office Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak (at podium) and St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman (left) join Republican officials for the announcement of the Twin Cities as host for the 2008 Republican Nation Convention.

## **Minneapolis: Convention will showcase city and feature nonpartisan community festival**

**By Mayor R.T. Rybak**

**Friday, Nov. 9, 2007**



The 2008 Republican National Convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul will be unique and one of the most innovative ever. As a distinctive multi-city, multi-venue convention, we will use the best that our two cities have to offer.

With top-notch leadership and stellar planning already under way, I am confident that holding the Republican convention in this place at this time will be great for the RNC and great for Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Hosting the RNC is an opportunity to showcase for the world the beauty of our city, the strength of our economy, the creativity of our people, and the richness of our arts and culture. When the conventioners and worldwide media arrive, they will see what we've known all along:

- We are an economic powerhouse. Minneapolis-St. Paul boasts a strong, growing economy with 19 Fortune 500 companies, more per capita than any state except one.
- We're routinely and rightly regarded as among the smartest, healthiest, greenest and cleanest cities around. We attract the best and brightest, who come here and stay here.
- Our vibrant, cutting-edge arts, culture and architecture are the envy of other cities. But what we will gain from hosting the RNC is more than just short-term and long-term economic benefits, more than just the limelight of world news cameras. Hosting this convention gives us an exciting opportunity to promote civic involvement and enrichment for our own residents. It's also a chance to have fun.

As mayor of Minneapolis, I want those who live and work here to stay here when the Republicans are in town. With so many visitors here, there will be some inconveniences, but there also will be rare and fun attractions.



So, stay and enjoy the party. Our unique multi-city effort will ensure that many entertainment venues will be used, but few will be overwhelmed. I hope you'll stay and help to make our 40,000 guests feel welcome.

I also want our residents to benefit from this experience, to engage and learn more about presidential politics — regardless of your political affiliation.

That's why we're planning a yet-to-be-named "community festival" at the Minneapolis Convention Center that will be open to area residents to discuss politics, learn more about the issues of the day, meet new people and be a part of this exciting moment in history.

As two cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul have a rich and complex history often marked by rivalry as much as co-dependence. As one region competing in a global economy, Minneapolis-St. Paul offers one of the most ideal, most livable urban areas anywhere. By working together, we persuaded the Republican Party to hold its convention here, and by working together, we will show the world that we continue to be a region that works.

*R.T. Rybak was elected mayor of Minneapolis in 2001 and was re-elected in 2005.*

## St. Paul: It's our chance to showcase nation's 'most livable city'

By Erin Dady

Friday, Nov. 9, 2007



For four days in September, the City of St. Paul will shine in the national spotlight as it hosts one of the biggest events in the world. With 15,000 members of the national and international media camped at the St. Paul RiverCentre Convention Center, hosting the 2008 Republican National Convention presents an opportunity of a lifetime to showcase the region.

Members of the Republican National Committee chose Minneapolis-St. Paul to host their 2008 convention because of the quality of our facilities, the depth of our arts and culture, and the enthusiasm our community showed for hosting the event. They said the Xcel Energy Center is perfectly situated to host their event and is simply one of the best arenas in the country.

Our market research tells us that people who live outside of the Midwest do not know much about St. Paul. Out of the thousands of media representatives, delegates, and opinion leaders who are coming to the event, I would guess a significant percentage could not locate St. Paul on a map. As host of the 2008 Republican National Convention, we will have the opportunity to share St. Paul's story and tell our guests what we already know — St. Paul is the most livable city in America, with a vibrant arts community, educated workforce, beautiful neighborhoods, and state-of-the-art facilities.

Hosting a national political convention strengthens St. Paul's resumé. If we can host a political convention, we can host anything. On Sept. 5, when all of the delegates have gone home, we will have a stronger convention market, changed perceptions of our metro area and a boost in civic pride.

Already, St. Paul is reaping the benefits of hosting the RNC convention, both economically and with media attention. The RNC recently leased 50,000 square feet of office space, and dozens of staff members have moved to downtown St. Paul. (By convention time next summer, the number of GOP staff here will have grown to more than 150.)

And, both St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak appeared on a segment of "The Tonight Show" with Jay Leno to preview the convention and the New York Times now publishes a periodic column titled "As St. Paul Goes..."

This convention also offers a unique opportunity for the residents and students of St. Paul. Democrat or Republican, political conventions are exciting and we will have a front row seat to the political process and will experience the excitement of democracy and political conventions in action.

Both Mayor Coleman and Mayor Rybak shared a vision of hosting either the RNC or DNC convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul. They knew this opportunity is not about politics — it is about business. The chance to showcase our region to the world for four days in September will bring media attention to our region that money simply couldn't buy.

*Erin Dady, St. Paul's director of marketing, is coordinating the city's convention planning. She can be reached at [erin.dady@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:erin.dady@ci.stpaul.mn.us).*

## **Bloomington: We want to make a good impression and help visitors have a good time**

**By Mayor Gene Winstead**

Friday, Nov. 9, 2007



During the GOP National Convention in August, the eyes of the world will be on our region. With significant media coverage and many influential people coming to Bloomington, we will be putting our best foot forward to make a good impression — and good impressions have a way of producing unexpected benefits in the future.

Many prominent visitors will come to enjoy the many amenities Bloomington has to offer, such as the Mall of America. An incredible one-third of the city's land area is devoted to parks and open space, such as the Minnesota Wildlife Refuge, one of the only urban wildlife refuges in the United States.

As the metro area's third-largest city, Bloomington is conveniently located near key transportation links, including I-35W and I-494, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The Hiawatha light rail transit line — which has three stations in Bloomington (including a stop at the Mall of America) — also provides an easy way for visitors to access our attractions from the airport or downtown Minneapolis.

The Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that convention attendees, media and others will occupy

20,000 hotel rooms per night. About 5,400 of those rooms, almost 70 percent of the city's hotel room inventory, will be in Bloomington.

Bloomington residents already are accustomed to visitors. On an average night, we have 5,000 to 7,000 guests staying in our city. When Bloomington's 7,800 rooms are full, the number of visitors can approach 12,000. Bloomington is often known as the "City of Hospitality," and our role during the convention will be as a place where delegates can kick back. Delegates will have to go to work in St. Paul, but they can relax in Bloomington.

An increase in visitors who stay at our hotels, dine in our restaurants or shop at our retail stores is certainly an economic benefit for Bloomington. Our city welcomes visitors. They spend money that circulates into the local and state economy, which creates jobs and orders for other businesses. It's also nice to know that lodging and admissions tax revenues support more than 10 percent, or \$5.6 million, of the city's general fund budget.

According to GOP convention organizers, the Twin Cities area was chosen for its vibrant communities and outstanding hotels and event venues. We've known these qualities to be true for Bloomington all along. The convention's international exposure will be a chance to show off for the rest of the world.

Bloomington Mayor Gene Winstead, who has served as mayor of Bloomington since 2000, was re-elected this week for a four-year term.

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